

Union River



For the last several years the Downeast Salmon Federation has had the unfortunate opportunity to bear witness to young of the year river herring and adult American eels that are killed by the operation of the Leonard Lake hydropower dam on the Union River in downtown Ellsworth. This monitoring pushed Brookfield—the dam’s operators—to study downstream eel passage survival. The study yielded some

discouraging numbers, showing that several of the dam’s turbines are highly efficient at killing adult eels. The results of the study did, however, push Brookfield to adopt a new operating plan that attempts to minimize the chances of killing eels during the peak of their migration. This is the first step in the right direction, but this year showed that it is not enough.

Starting October 12, 2016, DSF staff and volunteers documented and collected river herring and eels that had been killed or maimed while passing over the dam’s downstream “fish-passage” or through its turbines in what has become an ongoing fish kill. We hope this data and the media response to the kills will inform regulators and the public that there is a need for change and that there are many more steps that must be taken to begin the recovery of the Union River’s native fisheries. [You can see video evidence of the ongoing fish kills taken in the Spring of 2019 here.](#)

Union River Fish Kill_10_4_2015





Ellsworth Dam Update 2020 – September 24, 2020

Brookfield Renewable continues to avoid the problems faced by migrating eels and alewives on the Union River. Starting on September 24 DSF staff and volunteers began monitoring and observing fish kills below the Ellsworth Dam. This video from September 24, 2020 demonstrates the real and ongoing fish kill at Brookfield's dam in Ellsworth. <https://youtu.be/7oMdvqnD3X0>

DSF has filed complaints to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regarding this ongoing event. Read more here: https://elibrary.ferc.gov/eLibrary/filelist?accession_num=20201008-5111

DSF and coalition seek investigation for further protection of Atlantic salmon – October 15, 2020

By John Holyoke – BDN staff.

After being rebuffed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Maine Department of Marine Resources, a group of conservation groups and individuals is remaining steadfast in its effort to have the state conduct an investigation into whether Atlantic salmon deserve inclusion on the Maine list of endangered species.

In June, that group of 10 groups and six individuals [wrote to the DIF&W](#) seeking an investigation. However, a month later in July, DIF&W commissioner Judy Camuso and marine resources commissioner Patrick Keliher replied saying they didn't think state listing was needed, citing ongoing federal Endangered Species Act protection for the species, and cooperation between state, federal and non-governmental organizations on salmon conservation efforts. Read the article here:

<http://eedition.bangordailynews.com/Olive/ODN/BangorDailyNews/default.aspx#>



Brookfield Dam Update – October 22, 2020

by Anne Berleant on News, Waterfront, Ellsworth American

ELLSWORTH — In a long-running effort to make Black Bear Hydro address fish kills attributed to the energy company’s Union River dam operation, Downeast Salmon Federation has requested that the Department of Environmental Protection issue an immediate cease-and-desist order on turbine operations during the seasonal alewife migration. Read the article here:

<https://www.ellsworthamerican.com/maine-news/waterfront/cease-and-desist-order-sought/>

More Information Links

The Union River dams are currently under review for a 30-year license renewal with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Details on this case can be found at FERC.gov under the Docket # P-2727. Here is a link to the FERC website where you can register to gain access to the online application for dam license renewal and correspondence followed by additional links to press, videos, and docket P-2727 correspondence.

[Federal Energy Regulatory Commission \(FERC\)](#)

[Alewife Harvesters of Maine Letter to FERC 2 7 2017](#)

[eComment 1 30 2017](#)

[eComment 1 24 2017](#)

[Ellsworth American Op-ed Modern fishway is essential for dam’s future 1 20 2017](#)

[Union River Turbidity Study 1 9 2017](#)

[eComment 12 13 2016](#)

[National Marine Fisheries Service Letter to FERC 11 30 2016](#)

[eComment 11 17 2016](#)

[eComment 11 16 2016](#)

[Union River Fish Kill Video 10 31 2016](#)

[Fish Kill Complaint of Downeast Salmon Federation 10 16 2016](#)



[Fish Kill on the Union River Video 10 12 2016](#)

[Union River Fish Kill Video 10 12 2016](#)

[A report regarding the relicensing of the Ellsworth and Graham Lake Dams, Union River, Maine 9 2016](#)

[DSF American Eel Passage Safety 9 22 2016](#)

[Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Graham Lake Water Level Concerns 6 17 2016](#)

[DSF Complaint Regarding Fish Kill and License Violation 10 7 2015](#)

[DSF Protest of Fish Kills 10 5 2015](#)

[Union River Fish Kill Video 10 5 2015](#)

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Comment to FERC 12 3 2014](#)

[Union River Fish Kill Eel Video 11 22 2014](#)

[Alewife Mortality at Union River 10 27 2014](#)

[Union River Fish Kill Video 10 24 2014](#)

How to TAKE ACTION on the Union River

Stay informed by signing up for DSF's Union River email list if you haven't already. We're doing our best to keep you informed and up to date on the re-licensing process as it develops. [Sign up for our email list.](#)

Sign the [Citizen and Stakeholder Petition on the Union River Dams— FERC Project P-2727](#)— and talk with others in your neighborhood about signing the petition as well. Please return any hard copy [Union River Petitions](#) to Downeast Salmon Federation so that we can properly submit the document to FERC. Mail the petition to:
Downeast Salmon Federation, P.O. Box 201, Columbia Falls, Maine 04623.

Send a comment to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Your voice matters. Learn how to comment here: [How to eComment with FERC.](#)